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ON THE HISTORICAL IMPORTANCE
OF THE
LEGACY OF PSEUDO-MACARIUS

NEW OBSERVATIONS
ABOUT ITS SYRIAC PROVENANCE

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INTRODUCTION

This study has been lying on my desk far too long awaiting publication. It was ready as long ago as July of 1959 when I had the opportunity at St. Gerolamo on the Janiculum hill in Rome to share my new findings with Dr. J. Gribomont, namely that I had found an important new avenue to elucidate the question of the provenance of the corpus of homilies ascribed to Macarius¹. Since that time, I have kept Professor G. Quispel with whom I shared the same interest in this literature informed of my new approach.

Unfortunately, other urgent research projects pressed their claims as did manuscript discoveries of such moment that they could not be held in abeyance; my planned schedule of work had to be changed so radically that the publication of this study had to be postponed—for an inordinately long time.

The delay in bringing this work to the stage of publication has troubled me very much. My interest in this particular study is very deep. Since I first became acquainted with the corpus of the homilies of Ps. Macarius, it has exercised its allure upon me. This was so because it left me with no doubt as to what these sources really represented. But my recognition at that time was so novel that it was necessary to deepen investigation. The character and charm of the spirituality portrayed in the corpus stimulated deeper research. I had used the homilies in the patristic seminar at the University of Tartu and since then repeatedly in Chicago in my work in the Graduate School.

This independent work gave me enough to stand on my own feet. Scholars one after another have been falling into the arms of L. Ville-

¹ The Greek versions almost all bear the name of Macarius. The Arabic version goes under the name of Symeon. H. Dörries thinks that Symeon, of whom nothing is known, was the true author of this corpus. How certain he is in this can be seen in the title of his book.

court¹ and his claim that the homilies are of Messalian² origin³. I have never understood how the learned Benedictine father could attain such success with his article for the whole thing he proposed lacks a solid foundation. Even more—scholars have been scrambling to claims and contentions to support this thesis. Apparently the feeling that they were on the way to the recovery of the Asceticon of the Messalians has generated a good deal of enthusiasm. Nor was I impressed when Professor H. Dörries took this thesis over⁴ and threw his authority behind it⁵. His certainty of the Messalian origin of these texts can be seen in the title he gave to his book. There has been, indeed, too much ado over the Messalian⁶ claim. It has hindered rather than fostered advance in research.

My own work on this corpus of homilies has been greatly aided by research in two important areas which are essential for this enterprise. While on the one hand, this has kept me from pitfalls, it has, on the other, given me real advantage. The first area is the research on the history of asceticism of the Syrian Orient. My work has been guided by the conviction that in dealing with the phenomenon of asceticism it is absolutely necessary to know the sources on the history of ancient monasticism in the lands of the Euphrates and the Tigris. This large scale undertaking⁷ has created the premises for a better understanding of the phenomena unfolded in the corpus of Ps.-Macarius. Only one who undertakes the task of wrestling with first hand sources, to explore this

¹ 'La date et l'origine des Homélies spirituelles attribuées à Macaire', in: *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres* (1920), p. 29ff.

² Cf. A. WILMART, 'L'origine véritable des Homélies pneumatiques', in: *Revue d'ascétique et mystique* I (1920), p. 361ff.

³ He claimed that certain formulations in the homilies agree with the Messalian phrases quoted in a list preserved by Timothy of Constantinople and John of Damascus.

⁴ *Symeon von Mesopotamien: Die Überlieferung der messalianischen 'Makarios'-Schriften* (Leipzig 1941) = Texte und Untersuchungen LV, 1.

⁵ 'Urteil und Verurteilung', in: *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* LV (1964), p. 78ff.

⁶ Concerning the Messalian movement, see A. VÖÖBUS, *Les messaliens et les réformes de Barçaum de Nisibe dans l'église perse* (Pinneberg 1947) = Contributions of the Baltic University XXXIV.

⁷ A. VÖÖBUS, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient: A Contribution to the History of Culture in the Near East I-II* (Louvain 1958-60) = Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, Subsidia XIV, XVII.

domain, and furthermore to take the trouble to search out new sources¹ in order to elucidate the history of asceticism of Syrian Christianity can gain a proper perspective, one for which there is no substitute. Only in this way can one learn much and appreciate what is portrayed in these historical records even without the glamorous claim which has haunted scholars—to discover the Asceticon of the Messalians.

The second advantage for my work has come from extensive and tireless research in the traditions of the Biblical text in Syriac, particularly the archaic traditions of the *Vetus Syra* of the Old² and New Testament³. This large scale research⁴ has opened up new and fruitful perspectives. It has led me to evidence which has not been noticed and could not be—only deeper penetration into the domain of the *Vetus Syra* could open up this pathway.

However, in connection with the textual investigation my studies encountered a factor, which did not favor immediate publication of this work in definitive form. Certain findings had been made, but the lack of a critical edition of these texts made comprehensive analysis very difficult. Work on the old edition of the corpus of the homilies⁵ and on some manuscripts of the *Epistula magna*, made known by H. Dörries⁶ made it manifest, that what was true of textual studies in general was also true here: since the archaic elements, as research has shown time and time again, are bound to disappear, adequate textual research must build on the widest possible manuscript basis. The *Epistula magna* appeared in 1954⁷, however the homilies themselves were allowed to

¹ Cf. A. VÖÖBUS, *New Important Manuscript Discoveries for the History of Syriac Literature* (in press).

² A. VÖÖBUS, *Peschitta und Targumim des Pentateuchs: Neues Licht zur Frage der Herkunft der Peschitta aus dem altpalästinischen Targum. Handschriftenstudien* (Stockholm 1958) = Papers of the Estonian Theological Society in Exile IX.

³ A. VÖÖBUS, *Studies in the History of the Gospel Text in Syriac* (Louvain 1951) = Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, Subsidia III.

⁴ See also A. VÖÖBUS, *Studies in the History of the Gospel Text in Syriac* II (in preparation).

⁵ Τοῦ ὁσίου πατρὸς Μακαρίου τοῦ Ἀιγυπτίου ὁμιλίας, ed. J. PICUS (Paris 1559). This text was edited from Ms. Par. Gr. 1157. Cf. *Patrologia graeca* XXXIV, ed. J. P. MIGNE (Paris 1860), col. 449ff.

⁶ *Symeon von Mesopotamien*, p. 144ff.

⁷ 'Macarii Epistula magna', ed. W. JAEGER, in: *Two Rediscovered Works of Ancient Christian Literature: Gregory of Nyssa and Macarius* (Leiden 1954), p. 233ff. The edition is based on three manuscripts and the text which was edited previously under Ephrēm's name.

wait in limbo for a time. Then new homilies of another type were discovered and published in 1961¹, and three years later the corpus of fifty homilies² came out in a critical edition³.

The present study contains only three sections from a projected more extensive work. In the first part a resumé of that is presented, in the second only the Scriptural evidence found in the *Epistula magna* and this only as a selection, and in the third part a resumé of a literary-historical problem.

Whether the whole work, containing all the Scriptural material, will be published, remains to be seen. In any case it was necessary to publish the study at the very least in this form since the third volume of my *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient*⁴ is now in the final stage of preparation for publication. This makes the present study unavoidable. For the subject of asceticism in Ps.-Macarius treated in vol. III is based on my own research but the literary historical and textual critical evidence is of a kind which cannot there be included.

¹ *Neue Homilien des Makarius / Symeon I: aus Typus III*, ed. E. KLOSTERMANN - H. BERTHOLD (Berlin 1961) = *Texte und Untersuchungen* LXXII.

² *Die 50 geistlichen Homilien des Makarius*, ed. H. DÖRRIES - E. KLOSTERMANN - M. KROEGER (Berlin 1964) = *Patristische Texte und Studien* IV.

³ The corpus of 64 texts in Ms. Vat. Gr. 694 is, in large part, still inedited.

⁴ CSCO, Subsidia.

THE PHYSIOGNOMY OF SPIRITUALITY

The primary task for every treatment of the corpus of the homilies is to understand the spiritual and religious milieu which constitutes the *Sitz im Leben* for this document. What immediately catches the attention of a historian of the Syrian Orient is the form of asceticism which is unfolded in the homilies of Ps.-Macarius. Acquaintance with this phenomenon is of such a kind that it must raise the question of its provenance. The facts are as startling as they are weighty from whatever aspect the approach is made.

First it is strange to find this physiognomy of ascetic practice in a Greek source. The asceticism exhibited here is very peculiar due to its orientation. Since it is conditioned by a striving towards the spiritual at the expense of everything that is human and by the struggle towards the goal of perfection, the monastic communities consist of two levels. One, the higher, is represented by those devoted entirely to that vocation which fosters spiritual growth in prayer, meditation and religious exercises¹; and, the other, which provides support for the elite so that they can function². Such a phenomenon which goes so completely against the Greek monastic traditions is genuinely Syrian³. It should also be added that even the term employed by Ps.-Macarius for the monastic communities, ἀδελφότης⁴ is unusual in Greek literature but it is a

¹ Εἴ τις τοίνυν τῶν ἀδελφῶν τὸν διὰ πίστεως καὶ προσευχῆς καὶ μετανοίας ἀγῶνα ἀναδέξασθαι ἐπιποθεῖ ἐρῶν τῶν ἐπουρανίων ἀγαθῶν, ἀποδεκτέος καὶ πάνυ ἐπαινετός οὗτος καὶ ἀνθρώποις καὶ θεῷ· διὸ ἐάσθω καὶ βοηθείσθω ὑπὸ τῆς ἀδελφότητος τῶν συμμέλων ἀδελφῶν μετὰ χαρᾶς ὁ τοιοῦτος τῇ ἐν ἡμῖν προσκαρτερεῖν, *Epistula magna*, p. 270f.

² *Ibid.*, p. 283f.

³ Cf. VÖÖBUS, *History of Asceticism* II, p. 301ff.

⁴ *Epistula magna*, p. 258, 271, 283.

vation of distress, affliction, mourning¹, wailing and weeping². All these are features which fit into the pattern of a mosaic harmoniously revealing the physiognomy of an asceticism in every respect Syrian in provenance. All this, so contrary to the monastic way of life in the Greek tradition³ is in concord with everything that the passionate psyche of the Syrians put into an indigenous form of asceticism suited to their own needs⁴.

The inquiry becomes even more interesting when the portrait of asceticism is placed into the framework of the thought-world which sustains these practices. By doing so, not only can the inquiry be pursued to greater depths, but the question of provenance can also be brought into sharper focus.

To begin, in such an attempt the ultimate premise for such an asceticism must be our first concern. Here the place of honor must be given to the concept of regained or restored paradise. An entire homily is devoted to this central theme⁵ but the theme⁶ is so salient that it comes up again and again. Monasticism represents a return of man to the heavenly paradise where he belongs. The corollary of this basic vision lies in the abdication of marriage, possessions and wordly interests. In another word, the life which is commensurate to this insight is called angel-like life⁷.

Such ideas are strange to the Greek traditions⁸ but they immediately conjure up the imageries which have had such far-reaching significance for ancient Syrian asceticism. Here are the sources for the primitive Syrian ethos which lead to the radical interpretation of Christian life: as Adam, pure and perfect, by transgression became a victim to wordly lusts, so has Christ brought life in its original purity, restoring the life of paradise. This linking up of the Christian Kerygma and the theology of paradise appears in the earliest stratum of ancient Syrian Christianity.

¹ Καὶ ὡς τὸν σταυρὸν ὄντως βαστάζων ἐν ἀγῶνι καὶ πόνοι πολλῶ καὶ πένθει καὶ θλίψει διὰ τὴν βασιλείαν ἀδιαλείπτως ἤτω, *Epistula magna*, p. 273.

² *Die 50 geistlichen Homilien* I, 12; XI, 14, p. 12f., 105 et passim.

³ Cf. VöÖBUS, *History of Asceticism* II, p. 292ff.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 298ff.

⁵ *Die 50 geistlichen Homilien* XXXVII, p. 265ff.

⁶ *Ibid.*, IV, 8; V, 6; XV, 35; XXVI, 1; XLIV, 2, p. 32f., 59, 147f., 206, 291.

⁷ *Epistula magna*, p. 285.

⁸ Cf. VöÖBUS, *History of Asceticism* II, p. 292ff.

It is portrayed vividly in the Odes of Salomon¹ where it is brought out forcefully with all its consequences². It is important to add that this Syrian idiosyncrasy becomes tangible in the confrontation between the Syrian and Greek genius: the Greek version of this Ode³ displays a complete change in the translation⁴. What was strange to Greek thought, however, was bound to play a very important role in ancient Syrian Christianity⁵.

These observations can be expanded and that in several directions. Of particular value, however, is the attempt to look more closely into concepts of that ascetic thought-world. Some of these radiate a luster all their own.

In this assortment of notions pain, affliction and suffering exert an especial allure. Here suffering is meant to discipline nature for the objective of removing passions and sin⁶. Such pain and affliction have become an earmark of monasticism⁷. That is due to the fact that pain and affliction are means on the way towards perfection⁸. Such an understanding is foreign to the Greek monasticism. One is further reminded at this point that *'ulṣānā* had become in ancient Syrian asceticism the most important concept. The classic formulation is given by Ephrēm⁹ whose writings display the significance of this leitmotif¹⁰. Indeed, this word *'ulṣānā* became so important that it was used as a catchword for the essence of the monastic life¹¹. In this connection, it must be said

¹ The Odes of Solomon XI, 15. 21, *The Odes and Psalms of Solomon*, ed. J. R. HARRIS - A. MINGANA I (Manchester 1916).

² A. VÖÖBUS, 'Neues Licht zur Frage der Originalsprache der Oden Salomos', in: *Le Muséon* LXXV (1962), p. 283ff.

³ 'Onzième Ode de Salomon', in: *Papyrus Bodmer X-XII*, éd. par M. TESTUZ (Cologny-Genève 1959), p. 60ff.

⁴ Cf. VÖÖBUS, 'Neues Licht zur Frage der Originalsprache', p. 283ff.

⁵ *Liber graduum*, ed. M. KMOŠKO (Paris 1926) = *Patrologia syriaca* I,3.

⁶ Cf. *Die 50 geistlichen Homilien* IV, 14. 24; V, 5, p. 37f., 43, 50f.

⁷ 'Ἀλλ' ὥς φιλαλήθεις μέχρι τέλους τὸν πόνον καὶ τὴν θλίψιν καὶ ἀγῶνα καὶ δρόμον ἀπανστον ἔχωμεν . . .', *Epistula magna*, p. 255.

⁸ . . . δι' ὁποίων τε πόνων καὶ ιδρώτων καὶ ἐπιτηδεύσεως τοῦ προειρημένου, τῆς εὐσεβείας σκοποῦ ἐπιτυχεῖν οἱ φιλαλήθεις δύνανται ἀναγκαῖον διαλαλῆσαι, *ibid.*, p. 256.

⁹ *Srboyn Ep'remi matenagrowt'iwnk'* II (Venetia 1836), p. 240.

¹⁰ A. VÖÖBUS, *Untersuchungen über die Authentizität einiger asketischer Texte, überliefert unter dem Namen "Ephraem Syrus"* (Pinneberg 1947) = *Contributions of the Baltic University* LVII, p. 28f.

¹¹ Cf. 'the cross of the *'ulṣānā*', Ms. Br. Mus. Orient. 1300, fol. 159b.

that the term *ἀσκησις* which appears in the corpus of the homilies clearly represents the Syriac *ʿanwayūlā* which beyond being the ordinary term for monasticism covers the total scope of mortification¹.

Another very peculiar concept appears in the word 'rest'—a concept which Ps.-Macarius uses very often. Even a glance at his writings shows that we have here to do with a very important notion pertaining to the attainment of a high spiritual level in the ascetic life. The verb *ἀναπαύω* as well as the noun *ἀνάπαυσις* in fact play a very important role in his religious vocabulary. Mostly the term is used without explanation but it is upon occasion introduced with some clarifying comments². Once it is given fuller treatment³. What is meant by it is a deeper spiritual experience, an attainment, by climbing up the ladder of spiritual pursuit to the level of enlightenment of an inexpressible mystical illumination, and of an ineffable fellowship with the unseen world.

This phenomenon puts us face to face with something which is of Syrian provenance. The evidence is crystal clear. The Odes of Salomon constitute the best exponent⁴ among the oldest sources. It abounds in richness. The wealth of this notion is reflected also in the idea of quietness and calm, so intimately associated with that of 'rest'. In every way it represents an indigenous notion of farreaching implications⁵. The Acts of Thomas display the term carrying the same important role⁶. These records of the most ancient Syriac traditions show us that the idea of *neyāḥā* 'rest' is structural to the thought-world of the ancient Syrian asceticism⁷.

A treatment of salient notions in this ascetic mode must include at least the notion of pneumatism. The experience of the Spirit is a leit-motif which thoroughly permeates all the texts of Ps.-Macarius. The core of the pneumatic discussion is the idea of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. All progress in the realm of the spirit is contingent upon it. It is a *conditio sine qua non* as can be illustrated for example in the meaning given to the parable of Ten Virgins. According to this Scripture testimo-

¹ See page 29.

² *Die 50 geistlichen Homilien* I, 8-9, 12; II, 2, 4; IV, 14; VIII, 5; X, 2; XV, 15 etc., p. 9f., 12f., 15f., 17ff., 37f., 82, 93f., 136 etc.

³ *Ibid.*, XXXV, 1-3, p. 262.

⁴ Ode III, 5; XI, 12; XXV, 12; XXX, 2-3.7; XXXV, 6; XXXVII, 4; XXXVIII.

⁵ Cf. VöÖBUS, 'Neues Licht zur Frage der Originalsprache', p. 282f.

⁶ *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*, ed. W. WRIGHT (London 1871).

⁷ Cf. VöÖBUS, *History of Asceticism* I, p. 63ff.

ny the oil used by the five prudent virgins was the oil of the spirit¹. As a result of this gift there was complete freedom from all the passions; a total devotion to the spiritual goal, sustained by a cleansed and sanctified heart, thus became possible². This produced a level of spiritual life beyond every fall and passion³. Indeed, it is described as the attainment of such a plateau in the pursuit of spiritual life that the language of the angels, the gifts of prophecy, all knowledge and all the gifts of healing were as nothing in comparison with the experiences of perfect love⁴.

This is a thought-world which allows one to make instructive observations in several respects. First, the way in which Ps.-Macarius speaks of the Holy Spirit is very revealing. The Holy Spirit for him is a Mother⁵. She takes her children into her arms and gives them the breast⁶. This imagery graphically describes the experience of inspiration as a source of spiritual growth. When one thinks of the understanding of the Trinity in Greek theology, such a view appears totally out of place in a Greek document. But such an idea is completely at home in the Semitic Orient where the archaic idea of the feminine character of the Spirit was so strong that it could only be forced to retreat—under pressure! It suffices here to mention only one passage in Aphrahat: 'As long as a man takes no wife, he honors and loves God, his father, and the Holy Spirit, his mother, and he has no other love'⁷. Aphrahat here is linking up this idea with the life of the solitaries who renounce the world⁸. It becomes unmistakably clear that the terminology of Ps.-Macarius draws heavily upon premises rooted deeply in ancient Syrian Christianity.

As with the terminology, so too with the whole spirituality of Ps.-Macarius—it is contrary to the Greek standards. It roots deeply in

¹ *Die 50 geistlichen Homilien* IV, 6, p. 31; *Neue Homilien* XXVIII, p. 165; *Epistula magna*, p. 274, 22 - 275,9.

² Cf. *Epistula magna*, p. 235, 239; cf. p. 270.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 276ff.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 250f.

⁵ . . . τὴν ἐπουράνιον μητέρα, τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, *Neue Homilien* XXVII, 4, p. 155.

⁶ *Ibid.*, XXVII, 3, p. 154.

⁷ *Demonstrationes* XVIII, 10, ed. I. PARISOT (Paris 1895) = *Patrologia Syriaca* I, 1, col. 840.

⁸ Cf. VÖÖBUS, *History of Asceticism* I, p. 106ff.

pneumatism of the Syrian spirituality, in the indwelling of the Spirit and mysticism, all expressed by the Syriac *gamīrūtā*¹.

All the insights obtained up to now gain in scope when the inquiry is extended to ascetic hermeneutics, namely to the interpretation of Scriptural passages designed to underscore the ascetic thought-world. This involves a cluster of biblical logia, the most important of which have been awaiting introduction, at the very substructure of ascetic theology.

The logion on the renunciation of the father and mother etc. in Luke XIV, 26 is rendered contrary to the Greek text by *πᾶς ὅς τις οὐκ ἀφῆκε πατέρα ἢ μητέρα ἢ ἀδελφὸν ἢ γυναῖκα . . .*². As is well-known, this is the reading of Tatian popularized by the Diatessaron which replaced the Matthean and Lukan renderings. This new rendering, a practical encratic rendering showing how a Christian must act, stands behind the primitive Syrian ethos³.

The logion on taking up the cross in Matth. XVI, 24 appear in Ps.-Macarius in a form⁴ in which it is combined with new and explanatory elements: *μετὰ χαρᾶς*⁵ καὶ ἀγαλλιάσεως. That such a combination must have existed in the Syriac traditions is demonstrated by the Syriac Didascalia, by this very important ancient Christian document for which we now have a much fuller evidence in the new manuscript sources discovered recently⁶. This source offers the same rendering⁷.

Indeed, this logion stood at the center of the thought in the circles of Mesopotamian ascetics. Just how much the ascetics concentrated upon it is reflected by the various ways segments of the verse were combined and glosses added. It is probable that the rendering just quoted suggested correctives which were felt to be more adequate, for example 'the

¹ *Ibid.*, II, p. 307ff.

² *Die 50 geistlichen Homilien* XLV, 1, p. 296f.

³ Cf. A. VÖÖBUS, *Celibacy, A Requirement for Admission to Baptism in the Early Syrian Church* (Stockholm 1951) = Papers of the Estonian Theological Society in Exile I, p. 19f.

⁴ . . . τὸν σταυρὸν καθ' ἡμέραν αἰρὸντες μετὰ χαρᾶς καὶ ἀγαλλιάσεως καὶ ἀκολουθοῦντες αὐτῷ, *Epistula magna*, p. 254.

⁵ Cf. ἐξακολουθοῦσα τὸν σταυρὸν τοῦ Κυρίου αἰρεῖν μετὰ χαρᾶς, *Neue Homilien*, p. 43; . . . ἀράτω τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ καθ' ἡμέραν χαίρων καὶ ἀκολουθεῖτω μοι, *Die 50 geistlichen Homilien*, p. 52.

⁶ See *The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac*, ed. A. Vööbus (will be edited in the CSCO).

⁷ *The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac*, ed. M. D. GIBSON (London 1903) = *Horae Semiticae* I, fol. 59b.

cross of the 'ūlṣānā'¹ or 'upon his shoulder'², which became very popular and widespread³.

Also the Scriptural evidence for the goal of asceticism is expressed in a singular way, a way which is as suggestive in its richness as it is unequivocal as evidence of Syriac origin.

One term for Christ which frequently flows to the pen of Ps.-Macarius is the 'Bridegroom' to whom the ascetics have to keep their allegiance⁴. This idea in all its implications is put into proper perspective in the conclusion of the parable of Ten Virgins according to which the bridegroom goes with the wise virgins into the celebration. What is unfolded here is most revealing and involves several facts important for our inquiry. Before us lie exactly the same phenomena which appear in another Greek text⁵ and which are so peculiar that this homily turns out to be a translation of a lost Syriac original⁶. Thus there are reasons for becoming particularly attentive when accumulated evidence regarding Syriac provenance parades before our eyes.

The earliest Syriac sources reveal how popular the epithet 'Bridegroom' for Christ actually was. We come across formulations which leave us with the impression that they stem from very ancient creedal formulas. It must be said that the role this term plays in Syrian usage is very conspicuous. The role of this theologumenon becomes understandable only after one has stood at its real sources. How strongly this Syriac idiosyncrasy reveals its character and force is made manifest in the translation literature where the Greek and the Syriac genius meet each going its own way⁷.

Still more of a surprise is waiting in the wings. This is the ancient Syrian faith which clings to the conviction that Christ, the true Bride-

¹ Cf. VÖÖBUS, *Untersuchungen*, p. 16f.

² Cf. VÖÖBUS, *Studies in the History of the Gospel Text in Syriac*, p. 144.

³ Cf. also Ms. Alqōš 239, fol. 65a.

⁴ *Die 50 geistlichen Homilien* IV, 6. 14; X, 4; XV, 2. etc., p. 31, 37, 95, 127 etc.

⁵ 'Une curieuse homélie grecque inédite, sur la virginité adressée aux pères de famille', éd. D. AMAND - M. C. MOONS, in: *Revue bénédictine* LXVIII (1953), p. 35ff.

⁶ Cf. A. VÖÖBUS, 'Syrische Herkunft der Pseudo-Basilianischen Homilie über die Jungfräulichkeit' in: *Oriens Christianus* XL (1956), p. 69ff.

⁷ A good illustration is offered by the Idiomela of Cosmas and their Syriac translation. *Μηναίων* II (Venice 1612), p. 14 reads: καὶ ὑπόδεξαι τὸν βασιλέα Χριστόν. But the Syriac version of it had to be made palatable to the Syriac taste adding the term 'Bridegroom': ܠܕܝܗ ܠܠܝܠܐ ܡܠܟܐܐ ܡܝܬܐܠܐ ܡܥܝܐܠܐ ܡܥܥܝܐܠܐ, as this is found in a Menaion of the Melkite rite, Ms. Vat. syr. 342, fol. 21b.

groom, came for the purpose of gathering and leading only those who follow His call under the vow of virginity. This idea has been crystallized in a logion in the Gospel of Thomas¹, namely, that it is the solitaries who are meant by the virgins who went with the bridegroom for the celebration, thus applying this promise only to those Christians who follow the call to abandon marriage, possessions and the world with all of its demands. Just how deeply this idea is rooted in the ancient Syrian traditions can be seen in the records². The parable with this interpretation must have become particularly important for ancient Mesopotamian Christianity³ since it speaks of a separation which takes place among those who give heed to the Christian message—a separation whose *Sitz im Leben* is manifested in a very archaic piece of baptismal liturgy in the Mesopotamian Christianity⁴.

The measure of surprises is not yet full. There is something else which will crown all our findings. Even the terminology is very telling in this instance. Whereas the parable tells us that the wise virgins who were ready went to the *γάμος*, the marriage feast, Ps.-Macarius instead here reads that they entered the *νυμφών*, the bridal chamber⁵. Thereby Ps.-Macarius reveals who he really is—a Syrian, using a distinctive Syrian rendering⁶.

In conclusion, from whatever aspect we approach and probe the physiognomy of asceticism, the basic premises, special notions and concepts and the Scriptural support with its particular hermeneutics—there is presented to us the life and thought so deeply embedded in the ancient Syrian traditions⁷. Accordingly, the church-historical significance of this corpus

¹ Logion 75: 'Jesus said: Many are standing at the door, but the solitary (*μόναχος*) are the ones who will enter the bridal chamber', *The Gospel of Thomas*, ed. A. GUILLAUMONT - H. CH. PUECH - G. QUISPÉL - W. TILL - YASSAH 'ABD AL MASĪH. (Leiden-New York 1959), p. 40f.

² Cf. VÖÖBUS, *Celibacy*, p. 1ff.

³ Cf. *The Acts of Thomas*, p. 182.

⁴ Cf. VÖÖBUS, *Celibacy*, p. 49ff.

⁵ *Epistula magna*, p. 275.

⁶ See page 23.

⁷ It seems that also the liturgical practice in Ps.-Macarius reflects the same background. "Die Syrer kannten eine abweichende Tauf liturgie: die Salbung fand vor der Wassertaufe statt und war deshalb so wichtig, weil in ihr die Geistübermittlung sich vollzog. Man hat mit Recht behauptet, diese syrische Tauf liturgie gehe auf palästinische Vorbilder zurück. So ist auch in diesem Fall Makarius dem Judenchristentum verpflichtet, wenn er die Salbung der Christen bei der Taufe hervorhebt," G. QUISPÉL, *Makarius, das Thomasevangelium und das Lied von der Perle* (Leiden 1967) = Supplements to Novum Testamentum XV, p. 12.

lies elsewhere than in the Messalian movement. This corpus of homilies which has had such an élan—it has had a deep impact upon the mysticism of the Greek orthodox Church and it has also played an important role in the movement of Pietism—stems from the spirituality of ancient Syrian Christianity. It is from this recognition that historical research on the literature under the name of Ps.-Macarius gains fresh momentum.

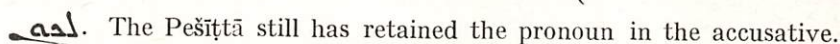
II

THE SYRIAC BACKGROUND OF THE SCRIPTURAL EVIDENCE

It is very fortunate that we do not need to stop here. We have discovered evidence which is able to open up a new vista. This becomes possible when we begin to scrutinize the biblical text employed by Ps.-Macarius. These findings advance our investigation and thus serve as a control.

Extensive research on the archaic traditions of the Biblical text in ancient Syrian Christianity leads us to see phenomena which have not been noticed. As to what is involved, the word must be left to the texts themselves.

Matth. V, 11: *καὶ διώξωσιν ὑμᾶς οἱ ἄνθρωποι*¹. The Greek original reads *καὶ διώξωσίν* or *διώξουσιν*. A look at the Syr-Cur and Syr-Sin explains both accretions since they here read:

. The Pešittā still has retained the pronoun in the accusative.

Matth. V, 16: *ἴδωσιν ὑμῶν τὰ καλὰ ἔργα*² against the Greek text: *ἴδωσιν ὑμῶν τὰ καλὰ ἔργα*. The word order is that found in the Syriac versions, and *καλὰ* is the rendering of the Syr-Cur and Syr-Sin.

Matth. VI, 1: *βλέπετε μὴ ποιήσητε τὴν ἐλεημοσύνην ὑμῶν ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων*³ reads against the Greek normal text: *προσέχετε δὲ τὴν δικαιοσύνην (ἐλεημοσύνην) ὑμῶν μὴ ποιεῖν ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων*. The syntax reflects the Syr-Cur. The imperative *οἶα* employed in the Pešittā apparently lies behind the translation of *βλέπετε*.

¹ *Epistula magna*, p. 278.

² *Ibid.*, p. 281. The reading appears in Ms. Vat. Graec. 694.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

Matth. VII, 14a: ὡς δοῦλος Χριστοῦ τῷ Κυρίῳ ἐκδεδωκώς ἑαυτὸν τῇ στενῇ ὁδῷ καὶ τεθλιμμένῃ ὁδενέτω¹. This rendering goes against the normal Greek text: στενή ἡ πόλις καὶ τεθλιμμένη ἡ ὁδός. What appears here is a familiar ancient Syriac rendering as shown by Aphrahat², the *Kelābā de-masqālā*³ and many other sources⁴ including lectionaries⁵. As such it was carried over into Old Armenian⁶.

Matth. VII, 14b: καὶ ὀλίγοι εἰσὶν οἱ διοδεύοντες εἰς αὐτήν⁷. W. Jaeger in his edition did not realize the character of the quotation and tried to put up a sign that this part does not belong to the original quotation. This is, however, the passage as Ps.-Macarius quotes it⁸, also in the *Epistula magna*⁹ and in many allusions, although it goes against the normal ὀλίγοι εἰσὶν οἱ εὐρίσκοντες αὐτήν. Again, the rendering is Old Syriac in which the idea of 'walking' or 'travelling' was characteristic, as shown already in Aphrahat⁹. The rich evidence in Syriac patristic sources, taken over into the Old Armenian and Old Georgian versions, is given elsewhere¹⁰. This Old Syriac form of the logion is translated in exactly the same way as in another source translated from original Syriac into Greek¹¹.

In order to describe the life of an ascetic Mt. XI, 30 is introduced and it shows the motivation for his consecration: καὶ τὸν ἐλαφρόν τοῦ Κυρίου καὶ χρηστὸν ζυγὸν . . . ὑπεισελθών¹². This form goes against the normal text: ζυγὸς μου χρηστὸς καὶ τὸ φορτίον μου ἐλαφρόν ἐστιν. What is strange on Greek ground is normal among the writers who were familiar with the ancient Syriac version. The Syr-Cur and Syr-

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 257.

² *Demonstrationes* VI, 1, IX, 4, XIV, 38, col. 240, 416, 680.

³ *Liber graduum*, col. 513; cf. col. 852.

⁴ Cf. VÖÖBUS, *Studies in the History of the Gospel Text in Syriac*, p. 101, 148f., 187f., 201.

⁵ Ms. Sin. Syr. 38, fol. 29a.

⁶ VÖÖBUS, *Studies in the History of the Gospel Text in Syriac*, p. 148f.

⁷ *Neue Homilien* IX, p. 49.

⁸ *Ibid.*, XVI, p. 78.

⁹ *Epistula magna*, p. 229.

¹⁰ *Demonstrationes* XIV, 38, col. 680.

¹¹ Cf. VÖÖBUS, *Studies in the History of the Gospel Text in Syriac*, p. 187f.

¹² Ephrēm, 'In sanctos XL martyres', in: *Ephraemi Syri Opera omnia quae extant*, ed. P. MÖBARREK II (Romae 1740), col. 331B; cf. 355B; 210C.

¹³ *Epistula magna*, p. 257.

Sin cannot help us here but the reading ܠܠܠܐ ܠܠܠܐ ܠܠܠܐ appears in Aphrahat¹, in the *Ketābā de-masqālā*² and in other sources³.

Matth. XXV, 10: *μωραὶ ὀνομασθεῖσαι τοῦ πνευματικοῦ τῆς βασιλείας νυμφῶνος ἀπεκλείσθησαν*⁴. The Greek text of this parable in this passage reads *εἰς τοὺς γάμους*. What this deviation, which has replaced the Greek plural and not local, really represents, cannot be learned from the Syr-Sin—the Syr-Cur is missing here—but it can be discovered from the text used by Ephrēm⁵, Aphrahat⁶ and many other sources⁷. It is a rendering which has even been memorialized in an inscription⁸. It also made its home in liturgical sources⁹ and as an Old Syriac reading was carried over into the Palestinian Syriac¹⁰ and the Old Armenian version¹¹.

Matth. XXV, 40: *ἐφ' ὅσον ἐνὶ τούτων ἐποιήσατε, ἐμοὶ ἐποιήσατε*¹². Over against this the normal text is much fuller: *ἐφ' ὅσον ἐποιήσατε ἐνὶ τούτων τῶν ἀδελφῶν μου τῶν ἐλαχίστων, ἐμοὶ ἐποιήσατε*. The Syr-Sin does not reveal the archaic form of the text and the Syr-Cur is missing here. However this shorter form of the logion appears in Aphrahat¹³ and the *Ketābā de-masqālā*¹⁴.

John XIII, 14: *εἰ οὖν ἐγὼ ὁ Κύριος καὶ ὁ διδάσκαλος ἔνιπα ὑμῶν τῶν μαθητῶν τοὺς πόδας*¹⁵ runs against the Greek rendering: *εἰ οὖν ἐγὼ ἔνιπα ὑμῶν τοὺς πόδας ὁ Κύριος καὶ ὁ διδάσκαλος*. The word order follows that of the Syriac versions.

¹ *Demonstrationes* XVI, 8, col. 757.

² *Liber graduum* XIX, 7, col. 465.

³ Cf. Vööbus, *Studies in the History of the Gospel Text in Syriac*, p. 114.

⁴ *Epistula magna*, p. 275.

⁵ *Hymni et sermones*, ed. T. J. LAMY IV (Mechliniae 1902), col. 207, 209.

⁶ *Demonstrationes* VI, 1, IX, 4, XIV, 16, col. 240, 248, 416, 612.

⁷ Cf. Vööbus, *Studies in the History of the Gospel Text in Syriac*, p. 111; cf. p. 92, 101.

⁸ 'Di un' iscrizione sepolcrale siriana', ed. I. GUIDI, in: *Actes du X^e Congrès international des orientalistes* 1894. Section II: Langues sémitiques, p. 76.

⁹ Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 14, 493, fol. 102a and Ms. Vat. syr. 117, fol. 453b. See also an official formula for addresses in Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 14, 636, fol. 58a.

¹⁰ A. Vööbus, *Early Versions of the New Testament: Manuscript Studies* (Stockholm 1956) = Papers of the Estonian Theological Society in Exile VI, p. 130.

¹¹ Cf. Vööbus, *Studies in the History of the Gospel Text in Syriac*, p. 111.

¹² *Epistula magna*, p. 280.

¹³ *Demonstrationes* XX, 16, col. 920.

¹⁴ *Liber graduum*, III, 2, col. 48f.

¹⁵ *Epistula magna*, p. 288.

Luke X, 40: *Μάρθας μὲν περὶ τὴν διακονίαν ἀσχολοῦν μένης*¹ runs against the Greek normal text: *Μάρθα περιεσπᾶτο περὶ πολλήν διακονίαν*. The absence of *πολλήν* is very revealing. Such a rendering goes hand in hand with the Syr-Sin while in the Syr-Cur this element already has secured its place. That this is the reading of the Diatessaron is demonstrated by Ephrēm².

Luke X, 40: *κύριε εἰπὲ ἵνα ἡ ἀδελφή μου ἐλθοῦσα συναντιλάβηται μοι*³. This departs from the Greek normal text: *κύριε . . . εἰπὼν οὖν αὐτῇ ἵνα μοι συναντιλάβηται*. The accretion is very instructive. A similar rendering 'stand up and serve' is found in the commentary on Luke by Mōšē bar Kēphā⁴, preserved in a unique manuscript⁵ discovered recently⁶. This appears to be an echo of the reading in the Diatessaron since the Persian Diatessaron reads: 'comanda ad essa che si alzi e mi aiuti'⁷.

Luke XVIII, 6: *ἴδετε τί λέγει ὁ ἄδικος κριτής*⁸ reads against the Greek normal text: *ἀκούσατε τί ὁ κριτὴς τῆς ἀδικίας λέγει*. In this very interesting case we have before us a rendering which goes hand in hand with the text in the Syr-Cur. Also the word order is exactly the same as in Syriac⁹.

Luke XVIII, 7: *πόσῳ μᾶλλον ποιήσει ἐκδίκησιν ὁ θεός* is a rendering¹⁰ which deviates from the Greek normal text: *ὁ δὲ θεός οὐ μὴ ποιήσῃ τὴν ἐκδίκησιν*. This *πόσῳ μᾶλλον* is the rendering in the Syr-Cur and Syr-Sin, which has survived revision in the Pešīṭta. As to the ultimate source of this rendering the Persian Diatessaron with its: 'non pren-

¹ *Epistula magna*, p. 287.

² *Hymni et sermones*, ed. J. T. LAMY I (Mechliniae 1882), col. 255.

³ *Epistula magna*, p. 287f.

⁴ Ms. Mardin Orth. 102, quire 11, fol. 1b.

⁵ See A. VÖÖBUS, *Syriac Manuscripts from the Treasury of the Monastery of Mār Ḥanānyā or Deir Za'farān* = Papers of the Estonian Theological Society in Exile XXVIII (in press).

⁶ Cf. A. VÖÖBUS, 'Die Entdeckung des Lukaskommentars von Mōšē bar Kēphā', in: *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* LXII (1971), p. 132ff.

⁷ *Diatessaron persiano*, ed. G. MESSINA (Roma 1951) = *Biblica et orientalia* XIV, p. 266f.

⁸ *Epistula magna*, p. 248.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 270. Cf. p. 248.

¹⁰ The passage is quoted fully in *Die 50 geistlichen Homilien*, p. 273f. and *Neue Homilien*, p. 88, 134.

derà maggiormente¹ leaves no doubt. This is an element which as 'and wel more . . . schal God do' is reflected also in the Pepsian Harmony².

Luke XVIII, 7: ἐκδίκησιν τῶν βοώντων πρὸς αὐτὸν νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας³ is against the normal text: ἐκδίκησιν τῶν ἐκλεκτῶν αὐτοῦ τῶν βοώντων αὐτῷ ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτός. The transposition represents an ancient Syrian rendering. It appears in the text used by Mōšē bar Kēphā in his commentary on the Gospel of Luke⁴. The ultimate source of this rendering⁵ lies in the Diatessaron. The Persian Diatessaron reads: 'notte e giorno'⁶, retained also in the Pepsian Harmony⁷.

Acts VI, 3: ἀλλ' ἐκλεξάμενοι ἄνδρας⁸ reads against the normal text: ἐπισκέψασθε δέ . . . ἄνδρας. The element of election is an archaic feature which stood in the ancient text of Acts. It has survived revision in the Pešittā. It has secured its place also in the Old Georgian version⁹ of Acts¹⁰.

Acts VI, 3: ἄνδρας πλήρεις ἁγίου πνεύματος¹¹ departs from the normal text: ἄνδρας . . . πλήρεις πνεύματος. The Pešittā reads here 'the spirit of the Lord' but we can reach a more archaic stratum in the lectionary texts which unfolds the rendering¹² which Ps.-Macarius employs. The same has been preserved by the Old Georgian version of Acts¹³.

Acts VI, 4: ἡμεῖς δὲ τῇ διακονίᾳ τοῦ λόγου¹⁴ καὶ τῇ προσευχῇ προσκαρτερήσωμεν deviates from the normal text: ἡμεῖς δὲ τῇ προσευχῇ

¹ *Diatessaron persiano*, p. 290f.

² *The Pepsian Gospel Harmony*, ed. M. GOATES (London 1922) = Early English Text Society CLVII, p. 66.

³ *Epistula magna*, p. 248, 270.

⁴ Ms. Mardin Orth. 102, quire 13, fol. 5b, 6a.

⁵ This rendering has survived also in Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 14, 470, fol. 60b. This parchment codex is of the 5th or 6th cent.

⁶ *Diatessaron persiano*, p. 290f.

⁷ *The Pepsian Gospel Harmony*, p. 66.

⁸ *Epistula magna*, p. 289.

⁹ Ms. Sin. Georg. 58 and Ms. Sin. Georg. 39. About their textual prophyll, see Vööbus, *Early Versions of the New Testament*, p. 186ff.

¹⁰ *L'ancienne version géorgienne des Actes des Apôtres*, éd. G. GARITTE (Louvain 1955) = Bibliothèque du Muséon XXXVIII, p. 46.

¹¹ *Epistula magna*, p. 289.

¹² Ms. Vat. Syr. 41, fol. 172a.

¹³ *L'ancienne version géorgienne des Actes*, p. 46.

¹⁴ *Epistula magna*, p. 289.

καὶ τῇ διακονίᾳ τοῦ λόγου προσκατεργήσομεν. Also this case with its remarkable transposition unfolds the archaic Syriac version of the Acts, as manifested by the *Ketābā de - masqālā*¹.

I Cor. XIII, 1: καὶ εἰδῶ τὰ μυστήρια² stands against the normal text: καὶ εἰδῶ τὰ μυστήρια πάντα. The archaic form of this rendering appears in Šūbhālemāran who quotes this passage exactly in this way³.

Ephes. VI, 6: μὴ ἐν ὀφθαλμοδουλείᾳ⁴ is against the normal text: μὴ κατ' ὀφθαλμοδουλίαν. A look at the Pešittā reveals that the pre-position used by Ps.-Macarius follows the Syriac rendering.

Ephes. VI, 18: εἰς αὐτὸ τοῦτο προσκατεροῦντες καὶ ἀγρυπνοῦντες ἐν πάσῃ δεήσει⁵. The normal text reads: καὶ εἰς αὐτὸ ἀγρυπνοῦντες ἐν πάσῃ προσκατεργήσει καὶ δεήσει. Here we have to do with a recast which has caused the shift so that in the 'keeping alert in all perseverance and prayer' perseverance becomes related to prayer. This is the rendering which was known to Sāhdōnā⁶.

Phil. II, 4: ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ τῶν πλησίον ἕκαστος⁷. The normal text reads: ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ ἐτέτων ἕκαστοι (ἕκαστος). Already the Pešittā can enlighten us regarding this rendering. It uses the term *ḥabrā* 'friend' or 'neighbor'.

The material presented here, which is only a selection and excludes the Old Testament which also reveals the physiognomy of the Vetus Syra⁸, speaks for itself. Confronted with such a state of affairs, only one conclusion is possible. Since Ps.-Macarius did not use the Greek Bible but the Bible in the form of the Vetus Syra we have another evidence regarding the Syrian provenance of his legacy.

¹ *Liber graduum*, col. 60.

² *Epistula magna*, p. 249f. This is the reading in Ms. Vat. Graec. 710 and in the text under the name of Ephrēm, 'Ad monachos', *Opera omnia gr.* III, p. 33. Ms. Vat. Graec. 694 shows the adjustment on the margin and Ms. Jerus. Graec. S. Saba 157 has included it into its text.

³ Ms. Br. Mus. Orient. 6714, fol. 47a.

⁴ *Epistula magna*, p. 257.

⁵ This is the reading in *Ephraemi opera omnia gr.* III, p. 335. Cf. *Epistula magna*, p. 253.

⁶ *S. Martyrii, qui est Sahdona, quae supersunt omnia*, ed. P. BEDJAN (Paris: Lipsiae 1902), p. 286.

⁷ *Epistula magna*, p. 285.

⁸ About this archaic form of the text, see VÖÖBUS, *Peschitta und Targumim des Pentateuchs*, p. 105ff.

III

NEW LIGHT ON THE PROBLEM OF THE LITERARY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PSEUDO-MACARIUS AND GREGORY OF NYSSA

The issues which have been investigated receive enhanced importance because of their involvement in other questions of great significance for the history of early Christian literature and spirituality. In this connection the question of the relationship between the *Epistula magna* by Ps.-Macarius and the *De instituto christiano*¹ by Gregory of Nyssa is of prime importance.

The year 1954 marks an important milestone in this discussion. At that time, W. Jaeger resolved this problem by asserting the treatise of Gregory to be original thus making the letter of Ps.-Macarius secondary, leaning heavily on the work of Gregory². That is, whereas the *De instituto christiano* is an authentic work of the Cappadocian father, the *Epistula magna* on the other hand is held to be nothing but an expanded metaphor of Gregory's treatise. Jaeger was convinced that this literary problem was definitively resolved. He rejoiced that he had freed Ps.-Macarius from the stigma of the Messalian heresy: since the *Epistula magna* rests on Gregory's treatise, its basic views therefore must come³ from a father whose orthodoxy is in perfect order.

Judging from chorus of laudation⁴ the solution that Ps.-Macarius of the Homilies was a disciple of Gregory came to be regarded as axioma-

¹ *Gregorii Nysseni opera ascetica*, ed. W. JAEGER-J. P. CAVARNOS-V. WOODS CALAHAN VIII, 1 (Leiden 1952), p. 40ff.

² *Two Discovered Works*, p. 174f.

³ He ascribed the writings of Ps. - Macarius to the 5th cent., *ibid.*, p. 228.

⁴ A dissident voice is represented by J. GRIBOMONT, 'Le *De instituto christiano* et le messalianisme de Grégoire de Nysse', in: *Studia Patristica* V (Berlin 1962), p. 312ff.

tic¹. For many this question had been very touchy and delicate. If Gregory, a father and luminary of the church, had depended on a source compromised by the Messalian heresy—as was indeed maintained—then, it was apparent that the neat demarcation lines between orthodoxy and heresy were in danger of nullification. In this respect the solution brought great relief.

From the avenue pursued in this study, new perspectives open up on the matter of the literary relationship in question.

First the whole question takes on a different complexion vis-à-vis the recognition that there is a different cultural background behind Ps.-Macarius, one that stems from the Syrian Orient. The lack of knowledge about Syrian spirituality proves fatal to Jaeger's studies dependent as they are upon differences that concern just stylistic matters². Now an entirely different *Sitz im Leben* makes us aware of the important fact that there is far more involved than just stylistic differences—namely a different culture and a different understanding of religion. This vantage point makes new observation possible.

First let us see the Syrian and Greek genius in confrontation.

With regard to the arrangement of the ascetic life in practice, the *Epistula magna* presents a clear picture. By the *οἱ ταῖς ἐνχαῖς προσκαρτεροῦντες*³ a special category of monks is represented, separated from the wider community of monks. Here as we have seen, an elite comes into the lime-light in the arena of ascetic struggle and spiritual exercises, devoted to constant prayer and meditation⁴. Thus two segments are distinguished from one another and the talk about them and their respective functions leaves nothing to be desired in lucidity.

It becomes clear immediately that such an indigenous Syrian form of monastic life was foreign to Gregory. He had no appreciation for it. This can be seen in the fact that he left out the characteristic term and modified the formulations. And when the term does slip from his pen, it becomes meaningless in the context of the alterations he introduced into the text. Here there is disclosed in fact a kind of blundering treat-

¹ Cf. L. BOUYER, *La spiritualité du Nouveau Testament et des pères* (Paris 1960), p. 444ff.; E. BENZ, *Die protestantische Thebais: Zur Nachwirkung Makarios des Ägypters im Protestantismus des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts in Europa und Amerika* (Mainz 1963), p. 131.

² *Two Rediscovered Works*, p. 204.

³ *Epistula magna*, p. 279, 17.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 279, 15-21.

ment. His metaphrase takes over elements from the *Epistula magna* but the changes he makes are so careless that he does not integrate them at all. As a result, that which he wrote hangs in the air and ends in confusion¹.

Since we are moving on the terrain of ascetic life, it is instructive also to take a look at the basic terminology of asceticism. This is forcefully represented in the *Epistula magna* by ἄσκησις, 'anwayūlā, as a central and most important conception of asceticism². It is pregnant because of its all-inclusiveness, embracing the whole ascetic struggle. It is a term which brings all the manners of ascetic practices in mortification under one denominator³. The bearers of this level are οἱ ἀσκηταί 'anwāyē, whether they as members of the elite⁴ are engaged in acts of mortification or are involved also in the leadership of the monastic communities⁵.

As is to be expected, Gregory has no interest in the concept of asceticism which the 'anwayūlā represents. None of these terms has found mercy in his eyes. They are tracelessly, totally left out. They must have been too strange for his own ascetic concepts and terminology⁶.

In this connection, it should be mentioned that the same happened with another term, also of a cast not popular among the Greek sources. The term ἀδελφότης, 'aḥūlā, which appears so frequently in the *Epistula magna*⁷ is left out. Only in one single instance could it escape Gregory's scalpel⁸.

Special interest is aroused by the preoccupation of the elite in the monasteries with prayer. This appears in the *Epistula magna* in a lucid treatment of the virtues. This 'holy and spiritual chain' brings eleven virtues⁹. It is to be expected that prayer heads the list. It is

¹ The text dealing with two categories of monks which is crystal clear in the *Epistula magna*, has become in Gregory's hands so confused that the reader cannot see what he is talking about. See *De instituto christiano*, p. 87, 7-9.

² See its position in heading the row: ἄσκησις, σπουδή, ἀγών, *Epistula magna*, p. 297, 24.

³ Περὶ δὲ τῆς φαινομένης ἀσκήσεως, *ibid.*, p. 268, 1-2.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 258, 3.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 258, 9-11; 259, 15.

⁶ Gregory's monastic vocabulary is different and he does not use these terms in this way. Cf. W. VÖLKER, *Gregory von Nyssa als Mystiker* (Wiesbaden 1955), p. 254.

⁷ *Epistula magna*, p. 234, 4; 256, 7. 16; 257, 1; 258, 9. 16. 20; 271, 4; 283, 5.

⁸ *De instituto christiano*, p. 67, 6.

⁹ *Epistula magna*, p. 268, 5ff.

also to be expected that in addition to this position of honor some kind of elevation of this activity would take place. Ps.-Macarius says, indeed, that steadfast perseverance in prayer is the sum of all good endeavors¹ and the peak of all good works². Even the reasons are given: the union with God and the kindling of the heavenly Agape takes place through prayer³. All this is in perfect order according to the religious postulations of this author and the inner logic of his presentation.

What the text of Gregory offers is indeed very curious. He brings the same list of eleven virtues⁴—but here prayer is placed at the end⁵. It is impossible to see any other explanation for this than that he twisted the list in order to introduce a deliberate corrective. There can be no scintilla of doubt. Yet we have here more than necessary. The secondary character of this text is corroborated by the same blundering metaphrasis which we have already noticed. Gregory's treatment of the virtues begins with the unequivocal statement that all the virtues are equal and that no one should be estimated more highly than any other⁶. But when he comes to the end, he suddenly says that prayer is the leader of the chorus of the virtues⁷. Here he obviously picks up Ps.-Macarius again! Such a vacillation and confusion reveals the same lack of integration and inner logic in his metaphrastic recast.

Finally, this case also shows how these two different minds departed in their understanding of the role of pneumatism.

For Ps.-Macarius, the ultimate vision of pneumatism consists in this, that it represents complete purity from shame, a complete deliverance from the passions, the full, unutterable and mystical fellowship in sanctification through the divine power of the Spirit, which becomes active in the hearts of the saints made worthy of the new, superhuman and spiritual enjoyment of the virtues⁸. What is here brought into focus is fellowship⁹ with the Spirit in mystical experiences—the supreme desire of the passionate psyche of the Syrians.

¹ *Κεφάλαιον δὲ πάσης ἀγαθῆς σπουδῆς*, *ibid.*, p. 268, 20.

² *Κορυφαῖον τῶν κατορθωμάτων*, *ibid.*, p. 268, 20 - 269, 1.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 269, 3-9.

⁴ *De instituto christiano*, p. 77, 15ff.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 78, 4.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 77, 16-20.

⁷ *Κορυφαῖός τις τοῦ χοροῦ τῶν ἀρετῶν*, *ibid.*, p. 78, 9-10.

⁸ *Epistula magna*, p. 251, 23 - 252, 10.

⁹ *Καὶ μυστικὴν ἐν ἀγιασμῷ κοινωνίαν*, *ibid.*, p. 252, 7.

In Gregory not much is left¹ of the vision depicted in such glowing terms by Ps.-Macarius. His term is indwelling². With this goes his corrective: such an indwelling does not produce a complete deliverance from the passions but only from every evil³. Mystical experiences have been left out entirely.

When one stands face to face with such a state of affairs—these examples can still be extended⁴—then only one conclusion becomes possible for those who take the different *Sitz im Leben* in these two literary sources into account: Gregory, indeed, could use a text which fascinated him because of its deep spirituality⁵ but he had to make changes, modifications and adjustments. However, Ps.-Macarius with a deeper grasp of religion, of supreme goals in spirituality and higher aspirations, with richer insights and more passionate fervor, did not need a text like Gregory's as the base for his writing.

Another route can advance our investigation and thus serve as a control. This becomes possible when we exploit our findings regarding the archaic Bible text material. We have found the evidence in archaic readings. This makes it exciting to approach the question of relationship also from this new angle.

Confronted with such a state of affairs, only one conclusion is permissible. The *Epistula magna* with its archaic readings must be primary. Just such a text would have avoked corrections and adjustments by Gregory. This is easy to understand. Seen from this angle, Gregory's treatise must be secondary. Moreover, as the scrutiny of the entire biblical material demonstrates, Gregory's modifications and changes reveal the blunders we have already noticed. The organic relation between the authentic lemmata and their treatment in the context has suffered and occasionally even become confused.

¹ *De instituto christiano*, p. 61, 17-19.

² ... ἐνοίκησιν τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος, *ibid.*, p. 61, 19.

³ ... πάσης ἀπηλλαγμένη κακίας καὶ πονηρίας καὶ ἀσχύνης, *ibid.*, p. 61, 18-19.

⁴ See R. STAATS, *Gregor von Nyssa und die Messalianer* (Berlin 1968) = *Patristische Texte und Studien* VIII, p. 17ff.

⁵ Evidence for this appears in another of his writings, *In suam ordinationem*, ed. J. P. MIGNE, *Patrologia Graeca* XLVI, col. 543ff. Here he expresses his admiration for the Mesopotamian ascetics because of their high level of spirituality. He says that they instil a feeling of awe owing to their spiritual and pneumatic attainments. In this connection he speaks even of a resurgence of the primitive Christian ethos which made such a deep impact upon society. Gregory admits that this deepening of the quest of spirituality is beneficial for Christianity as whole.

We are at the end of our exploration. New findings and insights, as a result of long research, call for new tasks. It is not enough somehow to insert the results into the picture of history. Results such as these change the picture itself. As a consequence, the role of Gregory of Nyssa in the history of asceticism and mysticism must be rewritten. And that involves far-reaching corollaries of considerable consequences. New perspectives arise for the history of spirituality and mysticism due to the factor—the Syrian Orient!

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